



NEWS RELEASE

State Senator Gary Nodler
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MISSOURI SENATE PASSES LEGISLATION AIMED AT PRESERVING NATIONAL GUARD ARMORIES IN NEOSHO, PIERCE CITY AND SALEM

JEFFERSON CITY -- The Missouri State Senate passed legislation on Monday aimed at preserving National Guard Armories in Neosho, Pierce City and Salem. As a cost-saving measure, in October of 2003 the National Guard announced plans to close the armories in Neosho and Salem, while the Pierce City Armory was virtually destroyed in last May's devastating tornado that wiped out much of that community's historic downtown.

The Senate Economic Development, Tourism and Local Government Committee combined Senate Bills 942, 850 and 841, sponsored respectively by Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, Sen. Sarah Steelman, R-Rolla, and Sen. Doyle Childers, R-Reeds Spring. All three bills were rolled into SB 942.

"These armories are important to these towns, and I'm pleased that we were able to develop a bill that will keep them operating in some capacity in their communities," said Sen. Gary Nodler.

Under this legislation, the state is authorized to convey the National Guard Armories to the towns of Pierce City, Salem and Neosho.

Transfer of ownership of the Neosho Armory was complicated by a provision that grants a perpetual easement to the Neosho American Legion Post No. 163 which gave the property where the armory is located to the National Guard in 1938.

"The American Legion's rights under the current easement are preserved," said Nodler. "This was something that this Post was promised by the National Guard and the State of Missouri will respect that."

The City of Neosho is considering converting the armory structure into a new police station with one floor being dedicated to the city's municipal courtroom.

According to Sen. Doyle Childers, the Pierce City Armory was always an anchor for the downtown area and transferring ownership to the city will assist with that community's rebuilding efforts. The facility includes a telecommunications resource center and is used for summer youth activities.

"I am very pleased to see that the Pierce City Armory building will be useful again," said Childers. "I regret that a tragedy such as the tornado led to it becoming available, but I certainly appreciate the efforts the city fathers and community members have put into making this facility a central part of the Pierce City downtown redevelopment effort."

Plans can proceed to convert the Salem National Guard Armory for use by a cardiovascular wellness program for the residents of Dent County, said Sen. Sarah Steelman.

"This is great news for Salem, it means they can charge ahead with their plans," Steelman said. "By acting on this bill quickly, the Senate is trying to make it easier for these communities to move forward."

Having been passed by the Senate, SB 942 has been sent to the House of Representatives for consideration. Lawmakers have until May 14 to act on legislation.

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